

11.

The Church Covenant



The Pledge To God Led Church Membership

The last paragraph of the **Church Covenant** reads;

“We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word”

This part of the **Covenant** deals with the matter of church members moving to another area, where they can no longer fulfill their **Covenant** obligations to the church of which they are a member. PEOPLE DO MOVE, AND GOD DOES MOVE PEOPLE! **And when such happens, we pledge to unite with a church of like faith, where we can faithfully carry out the spirit and the obligations of the Church Covenant.** SUCH CAN ONLY BE DONE IN ONE OF THE LORD’S CHURCHES, A CHURCH OF LIKE FAITH!

As long as one is a member of a “**body of Christ**” they are obligated and held accountable to that body! The obligations of the **Church Covenant** cannot be properly carried out from far away. AND THE DISTANCE OF MILES DOES NOT RELEASE ONE FROM THEIR OBLIGATIONS! In light of this,

“We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word”

This part of the **Church Covenant** is a pledge to only move to such places where our church membership can be scripturally transferred! Paul went from the **church** at **Damascus** [**Acts 9:18-19**], to the **church** at **Jerusalem** [**Acts 9:26-28**], to the **church** at **Antioch** [**Acts 13:1-3**]. Because it is such a great privilege and blessing to be a member of the kind of **church** that **Jesus** organized during His earthly ministry, one ought always seek to be a member where they can faithfully carry out the spirit and obligations of the **Church Covenant**. There are privileges, blessings, and opportunities in being a member of one of the **Lord’s churches**, which those outside of the **church** never experience. IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHICH CHURCH YOU ARE A MEMBER OF!

I. THIS PART OF THE COVENANT STATES THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMBERSHIP IN ONE OF THE LORD’S CHURCHES

A. One Should Seek To Always Be United With One Of The Lord's Churches Because The Church Is God's Chosen Place:

Just as **God** had a fixed and settled place in the *Old Testament* [**Deuteronomy 12:11, 14, 18, 26; 14:23, 25; 16:2, 6, 7, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 23:16; 26:2; 31:11**], so THE CHURCH IS HIS CHOSEN PLACE! **There is no other place where one can receive scriptural baptism! There is no other place where one can scripturally observe the Lord's Supper!** THE LORD HAS HIS CHOSEN PLACE TO CARRY OUT HIS WORK UPON EARTH! In the midst of all the "*religious*" chaos, THE LORD HAS HIS CHOSEN PLACE WHERE HE IS TO BE WORSHIPPED! In the midst of all the confusion, THE LORD HAS HIS CHOSEN PLACE THROUGH WHICH HIS PEOPLE CAN SERVE HIM! **And a member of one of the *Lord's churches* should not even consider moving to a place where where God's chosen place does not exist!**

B. One Should Seek To Always Be United With One Of The Lord's Churches Because The Churches Of The Lord Jesus Christ Are The Dwelling Place Of God:

Paul referred to a *church* of the *Lord Jesus Christ* as "*the habitation (occupancy) of God through the Holy Spirit*" [**Ephesians 2:22**]. There is a special administrative work of the *Holy Spirit* in the *church* of the *Lord Jesus Christ* that is not experienced anywhere else! In the *Lord's churches*, **God** meets with His people in a special way. Every member of one of the *Lord's churches* ought to always desire to be united to such a place, therefore we "*engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word*"

C. One Should Always Seek To Be United With One Of The Lord's Churches Because The Churches Of The Lord Jesus Christ Are The Places For God To Carry On His Work:

The authority, and responsibility to preach the gospel, to baptize, and to teach the observance of all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded was given to the *Lord's churches* [**Matthew 28:19-20**]. This commission was not given to individuals, nor to any convention, association, or fellowship, **but to the Lord's churches!** Every church of the Lord, however big, or however small, however rich or however poor is under this mandate from heaven! **She has all the authority, all the power, and all the means that she needs to carry on the work of the Lord!** The *Lord's churches* have the greatest task ever assigned to any individual or group in the history of the world, and every church member ought to want to be faithfully involved in that work, to be consecrated and active in service to the Lord. To do this they must be united to the place where the Lord carries on His work. For this reason we "*engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word*"

D. One Should Always Seek To Be United With One Of The Lord's Churches Because The Churches Of The Lord Jesus Christ Are The Places Where God Receives Glory:

The *church* is an instrument to bring glory to **God** [**Ephesians 3:21**], and to reveal the glory of **God**! To give glory to **God** is "*to praise, honor, and exalt Him*" It is "*to show forth His greatness, and to draw attention to Him*" The *church* is not the only place in which **God**

receives glory BUT THERE IS A GLORY THAT THE LORD RECEIVES IN HIS CHURCHES THAT IS NOWHERE ELSE! The **church** is the place where a child of God can use his or her gifts and abilities that **God** has given them to the honor and glory of the **Lord** [**Matthew 5:15-16**]. Every member of one of the **Lord's churches** should desire to bring glory to **God** through the medium that **God** has chosen! For this reason we *“engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word”*

E. One Should Always Seek To Be United With One Of The Lord's Churches Because The Churches Of The Lord Jesus Christ Are The Pillars And Ground Of Truth:

The church is the **depository** and the **keeper** of the truth, and as such is called the *“pillar and ground of truth”* [**I Timothy 3:15**]. IT IS GOD'S SCHOOL FOR GOD'S PEOPLE! In the **Lord's churches** there is **instruction** and **direction** for living for **God** upon this earth! As *“the habitation of God”* in the world, through the Person of the **Holy Spirit**, the **church** is the place from which **God** speaks His message and teaches His people truth [**John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13; Ephesians 4:11-16**]. OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH ONE IS NOT UNDER THE GOD-GIVEN DIRECTION OF THE CHURCH! **God's** people should always desire to be in the place where **God** has deposited His truth, and in the place that is responsible to uphold that truth, and for this reason, we *“engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word”*

F. One Should Always Seek To Be United With One Of The Lord's Churches Because The Churches Of The Lord Jesus Christ Are Places Of Fellowship With People Of Like Faith:

In a world where those who believe and hold to the truth of **God**, are aliens and strangers, the **Lord's churches** are places where the one who believes, loves, and holds to the truth can find mutual support and togetherness! There is a **fellowship** that is enjoyed in the **Lord's churches** [**Acts 2:42**] that cannot be found anywhere else! For this reason we *“engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word”*

Membership in one of the **Lord's churches** is a way of life, and one should never be content to have their name on the membership roll, and because of distance be unable to faithfully fulfill their **Covenant** obligations. **Church** members are obligated to use their **time**, **talents**, **presence**, **influence**, and **means** to support the work of the **Lord**. If distance makes it impossible to give such support to the **church** of which they are a member, there is the pledge *“that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word”* This is to be done so that they can be a blessing to a *“body of Christ”* and so that they can serve the Lord like they should.

II. THE LORD'S WILL SHOULD BE SOUGHT WHEN UNITING WITH ONE OF THE LORD'S CHURCHES

A. One Should Not Even Consider Moving To A Place Where There Is Not A Church Of The Lord Jesus Christ:

It is not the *Lord's* will for you to be in a place where you cannot be a faithful member of one of the *Lord's churches*, where you cannot be a blessing and a help to one of the *Lord's churches*. People should only consider moving to a place where their church membership can be scripturally transferred, where a letter of recommendation can be granted [**Romans 16:1-2**].

B. When Uniting With One Of The Lord's Churches There Must Be A Seeking Of God's Will:

If one is considering moving, and there happens to be one of the *Lord's churches* in that place, the *Lord's* will must be sought as to whether or not the *Lord* would have them to be a member of that particular *church*. It is true, that no *church* that is unscriptural can be a proper *church* for one to be a member. But just because a *church* is scriptural does not automatically mean that it is the *Lord's* will for you to be a member of that *church*! Most of "Christendom" believes that "one church is just as good as another, and that it does not really matter which one you belong to" THAT IS ERRONEOUS THINKING! Many believe that "as long as a church is a scriptural New Testament church that it does not matter which one you belong too." BUT THAT TOO, IS ERRONEOUS THINKING! It is important to realize that the *Lord's churches* are not accidents, but are specifically designed and constructed by the *Lord* Himself [**Acts 2:41; I Corinthians 1:2; 12:18, 27-28**].

1. Churches Of The Lord Are Described As "A Body Of Christ:

Paul often described the *Lord's churches* as such [**I Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:12, 16; Colossians 1:18; 2:19**].

(a). A Body Is Prepared, A Creation By Design:

A "body" is not an accident, thrown together in some haphazard way! A "body" has been put together by the *Lord* in a suitable order and for a specific purpose! This is not only true of a human "body" it is true of each and every "*church of the Lord Jesus Christ*" It is imperative that one seeks to be a member of the "body" that the *Lord* would have them to be a part of!

(b). A Body Is A Miracle Of God:

David speaking of his own bodily creation said in **Psalm 139:14** "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*" OUR HUMAN BODIES ARE A CREATION MIRACLE AND WONDER OF GOD! David still speaking of his own creation went on to say in **verse 15** "*My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret (in the womb hidden from the eye of man) and curiously (carefully) wrought (embroidered) in the lowest parts of the earth*" AS A CREATION OF GOD, OUR HUMAN BODIES ARE EMBROIDERED BY GOD! Not only is this true of the human body, but it is true of each and every "*church of the Lord Jesus Christ*" It is imperative that one makes sure that they are being added to a "body of Christ" by the *Lord*!

2. No Church Can Be A Proper Church For Membership Unless The Lord Adds:

When the **Lord** formed your human body He did not just take a bunch of bodily parts and throw them together at random, but He with great **thought** and **purpose** carefully placed them together **so it is when the Lord adds to His churches!** EVERYTHING IS SKILLFULLY PLACED! The **Lord** adds by **design** and with a **purpose!** WHEN THE LORD ADDS THERE IS AN IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ADDITION! **Church membership** is not about “*church shopping*” IT IS ALL ABOUT BEING **ADDED** AND **SET** BY THE LORD! It is not about your **plans** and your **devisings** IT IS ALL ABOUT BEING **ADDED** AND **SET** BY THE LORD! It is not about where you want to retire to IT IS ALL ABOUT BEING **ADDED** AND **SET** BY THE LORD! It is not about where the **work** is, or where the **money** is, or where the **opportunity** is, it is not about where your **job** may move to IT IS ALL ABOUT BEING **ADDED** AND **SET** BY THE LORD! It is not about **climate**, or **family**, IT IS ABOUT BEING **ADDED** AND **SET** BY THE LORD! Each member is to bring about a spiritual **increase** and **improvement** to the **church**. Each member should be an addition to the **worship** of the church, and to the **steadfastness** and **faithfulness** of the church. Each member should be an addition to the **evangelism**, to the **holiness**, and to the **spirit** and **attitude** of the church.

This part of the **Church Covenant** is a pledge to be where the Lord would have us to be, in order that we can faithfully fulfill the obligations of the **Covenant**. It is a pledge to be actively engaged in serving the Lord through one of His churches! The **Lord's church** is the greatest institution that the world has ever known! **Christ** established it during his personal ministry, and he is its Head [**Matthew. 16:18; Ephesians. 5:23; Colossians. 1:18**]. He promised that he would be with it through the ages and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it [**Matthew 16:18; 28:20**]. To it he gave the Great Commission and the ordinances, and for it he went to the cross [**Matthew 28:19-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Ephesians 5:25**]. He loves His churches, and he wants them to honor and glorify him as his representatives on the earth [**Ephesians 3:21; 5:25-27**]. It is a great **privilege**, a wonderful **opportunity** and an awesome **responsibility** to be a member (*a vital part of*) such a glorious institution! MEMBERSHIP PLACES UPON US AN INESCAPABLE OBLIGATION! **Churches** are never stronger than their membership; and a membership of **worldly, careless, negligent, stunted** individuals will prevent a church from accomplishing much for the Lord! There is need for every member to be **consecrated, trained**, and actively **servicing** the **Lord**. We are under obligation to follow the **Lord's leadership**, in order to be the very best members possible in the place where **God** has placed us.